

# New Haven Early Childhood Council

*...Creating Universal Access to Quality, Affordable Early Care and Education*

December 7, 2009

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

In partnership with Connecticut's Early Care Alliance and on behalf of the New Haven Early Childhood Council and New Haven's youngest children, we urge you to preserve funding for all critical programs serving children.

Initial FY 10 budgetary cuts to programs such as Family Resource Centers and Care4Kids have already drastically impacted Connecticut's children and families. Further rescissions, which in many cases are tantamount to program elimination, will leave significant numbers of children without the services they need to be ready for school, and many parents without the child care and other services they need to be able to go to work and contribute to Connecticut's economy. In particular, we ask that you maintain funding for the state-funded centers and Care4Kids.

**State-funded Centers** are the backbone of Connecticut's childcare system for its poorest children. Funding reductions will result in Centers reducing the number of slots that are available and cutting back on quality, which we know is so critical to a child's school and life success. In New Haven, this funding enables 116 infants and toddlers from low-income families to receive quality care in a nurturing setting, and makes it possible for their parents to seek employment, go to school, or work.

**Care 4 Kids** is an essential component for family's transitioning from home to work. It eases the financial burden of childcare and helps make quality childcare more accessible for working families. Care 4 Kids is also critically important for family and center-based programs. Without the revenue generated from Care 4 Kids, many family and center-based programs will become fiscally unstable and are at-risk of going out of business. For programs to survive, they will likely become less economically diverse as they shift to serving non-subsidized families. It is anticipated that cuts in Care 4 Kids will result in approximately \$600,000 – \$1,000,000 less revenue for New Haven's early care programs, including family childcare, where approximately 72% of the providers serve a child enrolled in Care 4 Kids. Without Care 4 Kids, there will be a reduction in regulated family and center-based slots; as a result, families with limited financial resources will seek alternative care from unlicensed sources, often casual care provided by family, friends and neighbors. This is not the kind of care that we would want for our own children and does not represent the best we can do for children.

In closing, the New Haven Early Childhood Council recognizes that there are no easy solutions or quick fixes to Connecticut's fiscal crisis. However, we urge Legislators to not balance this budgetary shortfall on the backs of children. When you are making these tough decisions, please take into consideration the gains that have been made over the last 10 years on behalf of children and the critical role a quality early care experience has on preparing a child to be successful in school and in life. Let us not go backwards, but creatively look forward to thoughtful budget solutions to Connecticut's budget mess.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Heath and Dr. Robert Windom  
Co-Chairs, New Haven Early Childhood Council